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AUTHOR Semons, Maryann
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ABSTRACT

This report compares the findings of a recent ethnographic study of a multiethnic urban high school to some of the highlights of a series of ten-year-old ethnographic studies on court-ordered desegregated school settings. The study of the multiethnic urban school employed an ethnographic design whereby a participant-observer interviewed students over the course of an academic year in a high school where no one ethnic group predominated over the course of an academic year. Findings were compared to desegregated schools described in "Desegregated Schools: An Intimate Portrait Based on Five Ethnographic Studies," edited by Murray L. Wax. The following areas are discussed: (1) a school's acquisition of a spoiled identity, the result of a shift from white majority in a school to non-white majority; (2) the colorblind perspective, where the issue of racial differences was never raised by either teachers or students; (3) the natural progression assumption, which caused schools to expect that positive intergroup relations would develop without administrative interventions; (4) the modern paradox, wherein students may dislike contact with other ethnic groups but recognize the social necessity to learn to get along; and (5) the development of subgroups that cross racial and ethnic boundaries. Summary findings include the following: (1) the spoiled identity phenomenon should be expanded to include social class as well as racial composition in identifying the forces that collectively change the reputation of a school; (2) both the colorblind perspective and the natural progression asumption must be reexamined in the light of the more recent study; and (3) the more recent study found a more pragmatic attitude toward intergroup toleration as well as a desire to avoid ethnic stereotyping. Brief personal narratives and two tables of statistical data are included. A list of 15 references is appended. (FMW)

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ETHNOGRAPHIC DEPICTION OF A MULTIETHNIC SCHOOL: A COMPARISON TO DESEGREGATED SETTINGS

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Maryann Semons, Ph.D.
Chapman College

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Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to compare the resesarcher's findings from an ethnographic study of a multiethnic urban high school to some of the highlights from a series of ethnographic studies on desegregated school settings. While much of the information on desegregated schools can apply to multicultural education, this researcher noted some significant differences which lead to an expanded and/or revised set of assumptions about the nature of intergroup contact.

Perspective

This study utilized a cultural-ecological framework which takes into account both the overall structure of the environment, including the political/economic system and the sociological aspects of the group, as well as the cognitive aspects of the learner, including the cultural knowledge individuals use to generate and interpret social behavior. Keen attention was paid to the interaction of the actor with the setting, the dialectical tension between the internal representation of self and the external event created by society. The influences which affect the ultimate outcome for the learner are multi-faceted and interdependent. One cannot isolate the learner from his/her environment, nor can one analyze the environment per se without taking into account individual responses.

Methodology

The study employed an ethnographic design whereby the researcher became a participant-observer for one full academic

year at a high school where no one ethnic group comprised a majority in an attempt to understand and describe the salience of ethnicity. Because the researcher aimed to capture the complex interaction of people, events, and social forces, her scope was holistic. Behavior was viewed in terms of the wider social context which affected it. Going beyond the reporting of interactions, the focus of the investigation was upon uncovering the meaning which the actors assigned to the events.

Data Source

The data for this study were derived from extensive observations and interviews. Following an initial period of observations of classes and more informal scenes, the unit of analysis shifted from the classroom to particular students. Five students were selected, based upon teacher recommendations, whom the researcher shadowed, each for a one-week period. Data collection and analysis were conducted jointly. The school year proceeded with the researcher interviewing students from as many different subgroups as possible, until she had covered a representative sample of viewpoints. A second set of students was selected to be shadowed in order to explore and refine emerging ideas. The primary source from which the comparison to desegregated settings was made was Desegregated Schools: An Intimate Portrait Based on Five Ethnographic Studies, edited by Murray L. Wax, New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books, 1980.1

Findings

When exploring the dynamics of a multiethnic school, a logical place to begin one's research is through a perusal of the

literature on desegregation. The five ethnographic studies of desegregated schools utilized as a basis for comparison in this paper were not selected because they are the definitive works on desegregated settings. Granted, the amount of research on school desegregation has been enormous. What was compelling about these studies is that they present a rich, textured portrayal of the social interactions which resulted from deliberate racial mixing. The ethnographic methodology was particularly suited to describing complex intergroup relations and to uncovering significant phenomena overlooked by experimental and survey methods.

Five areas emerged from which a comparison could be made between desegregated schools and this particular multiethnic school:

1. Spoiled Identity
2. Colorblind Perspective
3. Natural Progression Assumption
4. A Modern Day Paradox
5. Subgroups that Cross Racial and Ethnic Boundaries

1. "Spoiled Identity"

Comparable to a phenomenon uncovered in one of the reports on desegregated schools, Waterton High (a pseudonym), acquired a "spoiled identity" when black students began to outnumber white students during the late 1960's and early 1970's. At the same time, the social class composition of the school was changing. This research expands upon the "spoiled identity" phenomenon in the desegregation studies because it identifies social class as well as racial compostion in understanding the broader social forces which impact schooling.

Margaret LeCompte has described the phenomenon this way:

> A desegregated school seems to acquire a 'spoiled identity' which casts doubt upon its 'quality,' whether that identity derives from the characteristics of the students, the subjective belief structure of the community and teachers, or from deliberate actions on the part of school officials to dilute the quality of education.2

Whereas Goffman coined the phrase to depict the discrepancy between an individual's virtual and actual identity which operates to spoil his social identity,3 LeCompte has applied it to institutions and communities, which, she asserts, may acquire spoiled identities as well.4 Whether or not there is any objective evidence, the community starts to believe that the quality of their school is declining. Their belief structure becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in that they start to act in a way that reinforces and perpetuates their negativity. Longtime Waterton residents never used the terminology of a "spoiled identity," but they spoke nostalgically about the Waterton High they used to know, compared to the school as it is now. When pressed to pinpoint the time that the change occurred, invariably they named the late 60's to early 70's, which coincides with the time that the changes in racial percentages took place.

From its start in 1927, Waterton High always reflected the diverse ethnic mix of the city of Waterton. Whoever lived in Waterton went to Waterton High, which was one of the largest urban high schools in the West, serving nearly 4,000 students during its peak years during the 50's through the middle 60's. The Waterton Unified School District keeps demographic records only back as far as 1975, but it is estimated that during its population peak perhaps as many as 30% of the student body were non-white. That percentage steadily increased, and by the late

60's, after the construction of the new high schools in the area and the ensuing boundary changes, coupled with white flight to the suburbs, whites were no longer in the majority at Waterton High. Toward the late 70's the percentage of black students edged out the percentage of white students. This margin continues to widen, to the current time when the demographic report for the 1985-86 school year revealed that of a population of about 1400, 38% of the students were black and 23% were white. Table 1 provides details of the total enrollment.

Table 1. Racial Distribution of Students by Percent

White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Filipino
23	38	24	11	1	3

The "spoiled identity" syndrome, utilized to depict the altered racial composition of a desegregated school, also was triggered at Waterton High by a change in social class composition. Before the middle 60's, Waterton High served more of a cross-section of students in terms of socio-economic levels. There had been an original rule that any school boundary line should go from the hills, where the more affluent people live, down to the base of the flatlands, where the poorer people live, so that the schools would serve an economically mixed population. With the building of the new high schools, the flight to the suburbs, and the creation of the Waterton Unified School District, all of this changed. Waterton High evolved from an academic high school with a good percentage of college-bound students, to more of a business and technical school, a blue-collar school that educated the sons and daughters of laborers, with very few children of professional workers.

Thus it is more than racism than affects perceptions. The combination of this dual oppression greatly compounds the associated stigma. Social class prejudice accorded to Waterton residents and Waterton High students was evident on a number of fronts. For example, as part of a self-study written for an accreditation report, one of the academic departments wrote that their failure to implement a more effective program resulted from problems with the students, i.e., "many one-parent families" and "many AFDC students." Other authors in the same report offered this description of the school:

> Waterton High School serves a diverse community but one that is, for the most part, of the lower socio-economic range. The level of educational attainment of the parents of the the students we serve is low. The community exhibits all of the negative sociological traits of such a demographic unit: broken families, single parents who work, lack of adequate supervision, transiency, apathy, and frustration.

This report reflects the harsh, judgemental tone of its white, middle-class authors in its attempt to describe the rigors of carrying out an educational program for Waterton families. The city of Waterton is also stigmatized, and also judged harshly by outsiders. These attitudes do not go unnoticed by the residents, who subconsciously or otherwise accept the negative ascriptions about class and race and begin to believe them. The messages are often hurled in subtle ways.

Perhaps even more telling than a report which describes the ramifications of "negative sociological traits" is a letter to the editor of the local paper, written by a woman from one of the more affluent communities in the county, in response to a proposed

study on environmental hazards which have lead to increased cancer rates among the citizens of Wateron. This woman feels that "it's a waste of money" to do such a study or "to go after polluting industries" when her "people-study" of the area will tell why the "cancer belt" exists. People in her community "have less incidents of disease" for these reasons:

> They work in different occupations than the cancer belt people. They can afford houses in these nice cities. They are better educated and take better care of themselves. They don't smoke two packs of cigarettes a day with booze and drugs like my neighbors in...(Waterton). The people in the cancer belt are a very different group of citizens. There are many people, suffering physically and mentally, who just don't give a damn about education to prevent cancer or a healthier lifestyle.

In a classic case of "blaming the victim", this editoralist has not only absolved the industries which are pouring carcinogens into the air breathed every day, but has also ignored the reasons that Waterton residents cannot afford the houses, education, or health care that people in her city can.

What is particularly insidious about classism in this context is that it is accepted and acceptable. People both inside and outside the school make no qualms about pronouncing their judgments on the working class people of Waterton and the students of Waterton High. Comparable stereotypes directed toward race would surely not be tolerated, and the perpetrators would be silenced.

2. Colorblind Perspective

At one of the schools in the study of desegregated settings, the authors pointed out that racial identities were seldom explicitly referred to in public. Rather, teachers subscribed to

a "colorblind"5 view of interracial schooling that viewed attention to race as inappropriate or irrelevant. Findings from this researcher's study corroborated this information and expanded upon it in two ways. First, the students as well as the teachers supported this "colorblind" viewpoint. Second, the deliberate attempt to ignore differences extended beyond race to include ethnicity as well, rendering these teachers "culture-blind" as well as colorblind.

The ethnic breakdown of the faculty and staff at Waterton High is very different from that of the students. (See Table 2.) All of the administrators and the majority of the teachers are white. Many of the positions filled by non-whites are the lower status ones, such as teacher's aide.

Table 2. Racial Distribution of Staff by Percent

White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Filipino
79	10	3	7	0	0

Students reported that their teachers tended to know very little about their backgrounds. Although the lack of information was sometimes disturbing, most students preferred that their teachers not ask questions about their lives because they felt that the knowledge could be used against them. Take, for example, this conversation with three students, two Filipino and one Vietnamese, when asked if any of their teachers know where they are from:

(X) does - He asks those questions.

"What about the others?" the researcher asked. The response:

> They don't even know who we are! 'They're Asians.' That's a common thing-...They categorize us.

"Is it good when teachers find out about your lives?"

> Maybe where you're from, where you come from, your language. It's better when they know so they don't categorize you.

This same trio became resentful, however, when teachers "pried" into their personal lives and then gossiped about them, or spread rumors to the other teachers. Depending upon the relationship that a student had with his or her teacher, personal inquiries could be appreciated or resented. As another example, Yvette (black) responded rather angrily when asked if any teachers asked her about her life:

> Yeah- Mrs. (X)- She all into your life. She want to know everything: what kind of family you come from, which is really none of her business, not that I have anything to hide...
>
> She hold it against you...If she hear your mother was in jail before...if she thinks you're a bad student, seem like she be lowering your grade.

Besides knowing very little about their students' backgrounds, teachers tended to avoid any reference to race, ethnicity, or culture, except in rare occasions. When students were asked if their teachers ever paid attention to racial or ethnic differences, the question was always interpreted negatively, to mean showing predudicial behavior. For example, during one interview, three different students started talking about one particular teacher whom they said is prejudiced against black students.

Stan (white) agreed that not much attention was paid to the cultural differences of the students. When asked if there were ever references to where students come from, he responded:

> Usually if the other person mentions it or if it has something to do with, like for a message for the Asian Club, or something like that. Nothing like, 'Well, the Asians are this way.'

"Should there be anything more that teachers do in class to pay attention to differences?" the researcher probed. His response was, "No."

History classes offer an exception, as the course content is more likely to introduce other ethnic groups and cultures. For example, Carol (white) shared how in government class the teacher "tries to include other people's ideas and cultures." They have talked about issues, such as the way that the name a group calls itself changes over time, as in the the case of Blacks, who went from being called "Colored" to "Negro" to "Black." When asked if there were any other times that teachers paid attention to differences she responded, "No, not really."

Another student, Tina (white) objected to references to race in her history class, when her teacher tried to explain to the class how racism operates in this country:

> Mr. (X, white) will talk about Congress, how there's hardly any Black people- He's always talking about that- he's putting down white people...

Already defensive about being white, Tina heard discussions on white racism as personal affronts.

From all indications, then, teachers at Waterton High attempted to behave in a way that ignored racial and ethnic differences. By avoiding overt references to race, they perhaps felt that they could avoid racism. This "colorblind" view regards interracial schooling "as an opportunity for class assimilation"

where the purpose of education is to give all children the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to excel in mainstream America.6 It is mistakenly assumed, however, that if students acquire the skills to assimilate culturally, they will be able to assimilate structurally as well.7 The role of the teacher in this scheme is to treat all children impartially, regarding them as individuals, and encouraging each to work to the best of his or her abilities.

At Waterton High, teachers who assume the colorblind perspective perhaps not only see race or ethnicity as irrelevant to their goals, but also see the acknowledgement of such as potentially detrimental. Wary that any special attention paid to cultural diversity could be misinterpreted as prejudicial behavior, the white teachers at Waterton High tended to avoid any reference to race, ethnicity, or culture, except in rare occasions. Because whites have collectively been the perpetrators of racism in this country, some whites individually feel more vulnerable to accusations of discrimination. Paraphrasing Janet Schofield, one author attributed a "heightened anxiety among whites that their actions may be interpreted as motivated by race or racism" to "the increasing visibility of black students, educators, and decision makers, and the recognition that whites are coming to constitute a minority in the schools" which were part of his study.8

In one of the studies to which the quotation cited above referred, the teachers argued that bringing up race or considering it would only create problems "by raising a potentially volatile issue" that was not otherwise a factor. If some of the Waterton

High teachers assumed that bringing up the topic of race would cause problems, to some extent, they were probably correct. There were some students who resented information presented to them which pertained to race or race relations when they perceived that the teacher was favoring one group over the other. An example of this was cited earlier, where Tina felt that her history teacher was "putting down white people" when he talked about the racial makeup of Congress. White teachers have even more at stake from the possibility of facing criticism by black students for supposedly advocating a position that favors whites over blacks.

Another reason that whites and Blacks may have adopted a colorblind perspective is that they have grown weary of dealing with racial issues. Unlike the volatile years of the late 1960's, when racial tensions erupted into physical violence, the current time seems relatively peaceful. Some people would prefer that race not be brought into the forefront. Also, there have been times when non-white students have inappropriately accused teachers and administrators of racist practices in order to avoid taking responsibility for their actions, or lack thereof.

Unfortunately, ignoring race does not eliminate racism, and in fact, may worsen a situation if racist articulations are not being interrupted by those in authority. For example, racial epithets which are overheard and ignored lead observers to conclude that such behavior is condoned by the institution. Even in the absence of overt racism, the act of ignoring race and ethnicity has negative effects. First, such a stance eliminates

the opportunity for important information to be considered in the operational design of the school, including the curriculum, pedagogical practices, and social structure. Second, it also prohibits an exchange of information that could improve intergroup relations. That the condition of intergroup relations affects academic outcomes has been well established. Jencks et al., for example, suggested that a pleasurable school environment is associated with higher achievement.9 Schofield and Sagar have presented a summary of some of the other literature which justifies the concern with social relations among students in interracial schools. Cited, for example, is Katz, who has argued that hostility from whites can create anxiety on the part of black students that will interfere with their learning.10

A third reason that educators cannot ignore race and ethnicity is that society has held out the expectation that the schools will take on and resolve some of the inequities that are not being resolved by other institutions or by other means. Ever since the historic Brown v. the Board of Education ruling, schools have been saddled with the responsibility of breaking down barriers created by racism and replacing them with corridors of understanding, a completely unfair and unrealistic expectation.

Therefore, this research advocates staff development on multicultural education to inform and to encourage staff to remove their "color blinders." Administrators and teachers need to model an acceptance of the inclusion of race, ethnicity, and culture into classroom discussions and lessons in order for students to find these topics acceptable and appropriate.

3. Natural Progression Assumption

Even though students talked about the benefits of attending a school with a diverse student population and identified positive interaction as a goal of the school, none of the students felt that there was anything that the school should be doing to bring people together. The positive relations were expected to happen of their own accord, a phenomenon which has been labeled the "natural progression assumption" in one of the desegregation reports.11 This study expands upon the literature because the natural progression assumption had been utilized to describe a phenomenon that pertained to teachers and administrators of a school. At Waterton High, the students exhibited a similar tendency.

When students were asked about the goals of the school and what their teachers were trying to teach them, many had a difficult time thinking about the "bigger picture," that is, what the broader goals might be. In response to the question, "What are they trying to teach you here?" many shrugged their shoulders and replied, "They just teach." Those who did interpret the question in a more analytic way, saw the goals of the school to be one of two directions. Although the students never talked about class per se, one set of answers centered around the idea that the goals of the school were to teach students to move from the working class into the middle class. Dan (white & Chinese), for example, said, "They're trying to teach students to fit into society," when asked about the goals of the school. Thomas (Hispanic) was more specific:

> It's the lifestyle of the rich. They want everybody to be rich...They tell you, 'Go to school, go to college, graduate, do anything you

> want. If you go to college...you can do anything you want to in the world. You can load garbage in a truck if you want to, but you know you could have done something. That's your choice,' you know? They want your choices to be more open than they are right now. Right now it's closed to society because we don't have any skills. We have basic skills for labor, but they want to give us advanced skills.

The "lifestyle of the rich" that Thomas described is actually that of the middle class teachers. Though not rich, by any means, they are nonetheless better off in terms of material goods and status than are the students they teach.

The other direction that students' answers took when asked to comment about the goals of the school dealt with teaching the students to get along with members of different ethnic and racial groups. These answers would give support to comments made by a counselor, for example, who declared the following:

> If you carry nothing out of here except that ability to get along with people, you have learned here, you have experienced here. You're going to go far in this world.

When asked the question, "What are they trying to teach you here?" Carol (white) answered this way:

> They're trying to help us get along with other cultures...They're trying to get us used to other cultures (so we can say) 'Hey, they're not that different.'

Ron (white) made this response:

> I think they're mostly trying to teach you to get along with people - educate us.

"How do they teach you to get along?" the researcher probed. His response:

> They put different races in each class, instead of having classes mostly white or mostly black or mostly Mexican.

To some extent, this does indeed happen. Kathleen (white) offered this description of a classroom scene where students from all different races were working together:

> We had to dissect a fetal pig. There were just a bunch of us pulling together and we all just wanted an A on this project. It didn't really seem to matter (what race anybody was).

Group projects were one example where students in a classroom came together to work on a common goal and in the process came to know each other a little better. Physical Education classes were another place where students interacted. Kathleen described the phenomenon:

> P.E. is one of the most fantastic places to meet people. Some people I was never that close to, and you get into a P.E. class and you're all playin' a game, and you get to know each other so well!

Of all the students interviewed, none felt there was anything more that Waterton High should be doing to bring people together. Although getting along with people of other races was clearly a goal of many students, none felt that it was the school's role to take a more active part in creating the opportunity for more interaction. For example, Thomas saw it this way:

> People who are not Mexican that take Mexican American Lit want to know about Mexican people. If you want to know about Mexican people you can't learn it in the classroom. You have to go out and meet people and understand them and how they are.

For Thomas, then, this type of education happens best outside of school. Other examples of students rejecting the idea of the school having a stronger role in facilitating intergroup relations were plentiful. When asked "Is there anything the school should be doing to have groups understand more about each other?" students always responded in the negative, as in these examples:

Vinh (Vietnamese):
Not really. It just depends on the students. If the students won't cooperate, then they (the school) can't do anything about it.

Toan (Vietnamese):
You can't control people.

Stan (white):
I really don't know what they could do.

Richard (black):
A school is what you make it...The students have to make up their minds themselves to sit down together and talk.

Even Kathleen, who was clearly able to articulate situations in which the structure was set up to bring students from diverse ethnic groups together (intentionally or not), did not recognize these situations as a model for schemes which would pull people closer together. In the same interview where she enthusiastically described these classes where "race didn't seem to matter", she responded this way to the question, "Is there anything the school does to encourage mixing?":

> Not really. Except putting us in the same classes. I think they think we're going to do it ourselves or we're not going to do it at all.

And, indeed, this seemed to be the case. Ms. (X), one of the school counselors, expressed similar sentiments from the staff's point of view:

> I don't think the school should be doing anthing. I don't think we can. We have a hard enough time doing what we're supposed to do.

Again and again staff and students talked about the benefits of attending a school where the population is diverse. By all accounts, people were happy with the degree of diversity. The positive outcomes that result from such a mingling, however, were expected to happen of their own accord, the "natural progression

assumption." To the contrary, however, the research in desegregated schools has clearly shown that simply putting children of different races together under the same school roof will not guarantee positive relations. In fact, quite the opposite may occur, where contact leads to increased intergroup hostility.

In order to understand more about the conditions that affect the nature of intergroup contact, one must turn to the theory proposed by Gordon Allport in 1954.12 Called "the most widely shared theoretical perspective on desegregation and intergroup relations,"13 Allport's basic thesis is that intergroup contact is likely to reinforce previously held stereotypes and lead to increased hostility among groups unless these three conditions are met:

1. Cooperative interaction for the achievement of shared goals
2. Strong institutional support for positive relations
3. Equal status within the setting for members of each group

Two of the three conditions were not met at Waterton High. Both the colorblind perspective and the natural progression assumption prohibited greater attention paid to structuring cooperative interaction for the achievement of shared goals. Likewise, institutional support for positive relations was found to be lacking. The third criteria, however, was partially satisfied via the reversal of traditional social status positions that gave prominence to Black students.

Based upon Gordon's theory, and supported by a year of observation, the researcher concluded that intervention would be necessary in order to improve intergroup relations at Waterton High. Because the natural progression assumption is ascribed to by students as well as teachers, one could anticipate that efforts to forge postive relations will be met with resistance by both staff and students, a proposition which will need to be taken into consideration by planners.

4. A Modern Day Paradox

This next section presents a departure from the literature on intergroup relations in desegregated settings. The finding revolves around the discovery of a pragmatic viewpoint on the part of Waterton High students as they talked about the ethnic mix of the school. Changing conditions in the workplace have instigated a higher regard for the opportunity to learn to get along with people of different ethnic backgounds.

In every case, when students were queried as to how they felt about the mix of students at Waterton High, they responded positively. The goal of teaching people to get along, which students perceived to be part of the structure of the school, was one which they applauded. Even Ken (white), who was judged to be one of the more openly prejudiced students, acknowledged that going to a school like Waterton "helps you to deal with what's going to happen later on," meaning when he finds himself having to interact with co-workers of different races when he enters the work world. Learning to get along with other people was a repeated theme that students articulated in their appreciation of the mix at Waterton High. Eileen (white) was insistent that she

would never want to go to one of the schools in the district with a higher percentage of white students:

> I have to be with people that are a bunch of different colors. It seems if you got a mixture of friends you get along with everybody. Like if you go to (High School with higher percentage white), you don't get along with all the Blacks, all the filipinos, all the Mexicans because they just don't go there.

Again, students who had earlier complained about some of the negative encounters they had experienced with students of other races, still insisted that the mix was "a good thing." Kathleen (white) was appreciative of the experience Waterton High offered her, compared to how it was for her parents when they were in high school:

> When my parents were growing up, they didn't have this. Their attitude toward other races was 'Get out of my face!' They think that being with other races is bad for them...But for us, around here, it's always happened.

The paradox for many of the students of Waterton High, then is that while they may dislike an association with members of outside racial groups, they nonetheless accept the social realities that demand they learn to get along. Regardless of personal choice, students anticipate entering a workforce that is integrated, a situation that has come about largely due to the prohibition of discrimination based upon race coupled with affirmative action policies. Thus, students are exhibiting a pragmatic view of their future in regard to associating with other races and are appreciative of the opportunity which their attendance at Waterton High provides. This pragmatism can be capitalized upon by school personnel when they encounter students who are exhibiting racism. Teachers could, for example, interrupt

a racial slur by asking the perpetrator, "Do you realize what would happen to you on your job if you made that remark to your Vietnamese co-worker?" The findings from this study indicate that such an emphasis could be highly effective.

5. Subgroups That Cross Racial and Ethnic Boundaries

This final section presents an expansion of the reasons that students choose to cross racial and ethnic boundaries in their selection of friends. The practice of self-sorting by race or ethnicity and of staking out a turf is quite common at desegregated schools.14 Each group accepts some members of other racial groups, but there is still usually one ethnic group which is predominant, with a couple of exceptions. One is the students who make the top grades, and the other is the athletes, both groups that cut across racial and ethnic boundaries. At Waterton High, there was another exception, namely, groups that are self-identified or named by others because they specifically want to avoid grouping by race or ethnicity.

The most notorious at Waterton High is the "groupies," a mixture of black, white, Mexican, filipino, Hawaiian, and students of mixed backgrounds. The group of about 13 students derived their name from the boyfriend of one of the members. Originally, he used the term derisively, commenting upon how they tend to always be together. At first the members hated the name, but that is the name that they became known by, and eventually they themselves adopted it. Marcy described how the group came together:

> We all just started hanging around together. We made our little clique. We just started with a

> few of us and then we became friends with other people that we know. They just decided to join our little clique. They didn't want to be stuck with types of groups that only allowed their own race in. In our group, we let anybody in.

Gabriel described the "groupies" this way:

> We're just a bunch of students. We're not a bunch of black people or a bunch of Mexican people, or a bunch of white people, you know? And if we do something, some 'dastardly deed,' they can't say, 'the Mexicans did it,' or 'the wetbacks did it,' or 'the niggers did it,' or 'the Puerto Ricans did it.' The groupies did it!

The groupies take pride in their diversity. They know that they stand out because of their mixture, and feel good about that. As Marcy said boastfully, "No matter what school you go to, you seldom see a group like ours!" When the researcher asked Marcy what happened to people's ethnic identity when they all come together, she responded this way:

> We don't have one! We're colorless...Last year when people would come up to us and say, 'Marcy, are you Mexican?', I'd say, 'No, I'm a groupie.' And we used to do that all the time. In our group there is no races at all. We don't believe in nationalities or age or sex. If you're a groupie, you're a groupie. You're not 'Mexican.' You're not 'freshman.'

Though they don't consider themselves "preppies," the groupies are nonetheless "school people." Mr. Carletti called them "the brains," and again stressed his point that "the brains hang out together," regardless of their ethnicity. When asked what it is that they all have in common, one of the first things that popped into Marcy's mind is that they are "all basically school-goers." A couple of the groupies are "shooting for some kind of scholarship" and want to be honors graduates. Others may not have their sights on straight A's, but clearly, education is important.

Besides the academic drive that pulls them together, there is something else in the binding that keeps them there. It is a self-ascription that was pronounced during an interview with three of the groupies, Marcy (Mexican/white), Elizabeth (white), and Lisa (Filipino). Marcy started out:

> Everybody in our group hates their own race. Lisa doesn't like the Filipinos, Regina (black) doesn't like the Blacks, I don't like some Mexicans...We're like misfits from our own race!

The other two concurred as Marcy described the alienation that the groupies feel from their respective races. What emerged in the discussion that followed was that the groupies feel alienated from the stereotypes that are attributed to their race. For example, the three were asked the question about fellow groupie Barbara (black), "Does Barbara seem different to you from other black girls?" They responded this way:

> Yes! Most blacks are like, really loud, and you know, like to talk about other people. Barbara, she can hang around us and she can jump in hugging everybody, and you don't see other black kids doin' that...

Then indicating Elizabeth, the researcher asked, "Is Elizabeth different from other white girls?" Marcy and Lisa answered for her:

> Most of the white girls you see around this campus hang around with Mexicans, and do their hair like Mexicans, and try to be like Mexicans. And you see Elizabeth is not trying to be like Mexicans.

Marcy again asserted:

> All of us are different from our group. Lisa's not typical Filipino.

"How come?"

> She doesn't dance like this! (Marcy mimicked dancing; the others laugh.)

Then turning to Lisa, the researcher asked the question, "How are you different from other Filipinos?" Before Lisa could respond, Marcy and Elizabeth jumped in to answer for her, "She don't like them!" Lisa wrinkled her face and made an "Ugh!" sound to demonstrate her opinion of other Filipinos and her agreement with the statement before continuing with a response:

> They don't play sports. They're too cool. They have to be in little groups. They have to be dressed alike.

When Elizabeth was asked how she was different from most white girls, Lisa remarked, "She don't wear those pants." Elizabeth then continued:

> A lot of white kids around school, you see this attitude of, they don't care. They're just there because they have to be there.

What has happened here with the groupies, then, is that they have to some degree internalized the negative stereotypes that are attributed to race or ethnicty and have come to believe these things about themselves and about other members of their group. They then make it a point to demonstrate how they are different from the stereotypic depiction of their own group.

Gordon Allport, in The Nature of Prejudice, discussed the phenomenon whereby the victim of prejudice starts to identify with the dominant group when other methods of ego defense have failed.15 One of the primary reasons for this self-hatred, according to Allport, is the strong cultural belief in the doctrine of "individual responsibility." Even in the face of oppressive societal conditions over which individuals exercise little or no control, the belief structure persists that the individual is still somehow to blame for his or her circumstances.

Therefore, an individual that is part of an oppressed group comes to believe that the members of that group, himself included, are responsible for their persecution. The groupies have identified with their oppressors insofar as believing and accepting the inferiority of their respective racial and ethnic groups. On a more positive side, however, one sees an ethnically mixed group of young people that take great pride in their diversity, working hard to combat the stereotyping of which they have been victims.

Summary

The five ethnographic studies on desegregated schools, utilized in this paper as a basis for comparison, have made a significant contribution toward an understanding of intergroup relations. It was the intention of this paper to expand upon some of those findings and to offer a new interpretation in a couple of areas. The research for this study took place ten years after the five desegregation studies. The other key difference, besides the change in social conditions, was that at Waterton High, unlike schools that experienced sudden shifts in population as a result of court-ordered desegregation, changing demographics came about more gradually.

The findings reported in this paper expand upon the "spoiled identity" phenomenon to include social class as well as racial composition in identifying the forces that collectively transform the reputation of an institution. Classism, though every bit as insidious and destructive as racism, tends to go uncensored, and thereby condoned. While today's teachers would never publicly complain about all the black children that attend their school, they have no compunction about condemning children because of their social class.

Both the colorblind perspective, expanded in this study to include culture as well as race, and the natural progression assumption applied to the findings in this study. Like the teachers in the desegregation studies, the teachers at Waterton High avoided references to race and ethnicity. Likewise, they refrained from doing anything to foster positive intergroup relations. Students supported both of these positions. They did not feel it was appropriate for teachers to pay attention to ethnicity, nor did they feel it was the school's role to forge cooperation among the different groups. Both the colorblind perspective and the natural progression assumption must be reexamined, as both are potentially detrimental. The implications from this study propose an additional challenge to school planners who wish to rectify their misguided use, for it is likely that students as well as staff will show resistance.

The final two areas in this paper presented departures from the desegregation research. Students at Waterton High exhibited a pragmatic viewpoint that elevated their appreciation of attending a school that was ethnically mixed. They foresaw that their experience at Waterton High would be beneficial to them later on in the work place where they would be obliged to get along with co-workers of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. And finally, an additional opportunity to promote positive intergroup relations surfaced through an investigation of the "groupies," the subgroup that crossed racial and ethnic boundaries in order to avoid the stereotyping thrust upon their own groups. Clearly both of these issues point to a changing consciousness among students which promotes greater tolerance for differences, and less for bigotry.

Notes

1. The five studies, funded by a grant from the National Institute of Education in 1975, are as follows:

   "The Emerging Order: An Ethnography of a Southern Desegregated School," by Dorothy C. Clement, Margaret Eisenhart, and Joe R. Harding.

   "Stratification and Resegregation: The Case of Crossover High School," Mephis, Tennessee, by Thomas W. Collins and George W. Noblit.

   "A Field Study of Culture Contact and Desegregation in an Urban High School," by Francis A. J. Ianni, Mercer Lee Sullivan, Margaret Orr, Samuel Henry, and John Mavros.

   "Hard Walls-Soft Walls: The Social Ecology of an Urban Desegregated High School," by Jacqueline Scherer and Edward J. Slawski, Jr.

   "Social Process and Peer Relations in a 'Nearly Integrated' Middle School," by Janet Ward Schofield and H. Andrew Sager.

   These studies also appear in Desegregated Schools: Appraisals of an American Experiment, edited by Ray C. Rist. New York: Academic Press, 1979.

2. Margaret D. LeCompte, "Less Than Meets the Eye," in Murray L. Wax, principal editor, Desegregated Schools: An Intimate Portrait Based on Five Ethnographic Studies. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1980, p. 120.

3. Erving Goffman. Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963, p. 19.

4. Margaret D. LeCompte, op.cit., p. 126.

5. The term "colorblind" in this context is credited to Ray Rist, "Race, Policy, and Schooling," Society 12 (1):59-63, cited in Janet Ward Schofield and H. Andrew Sagar, "The Social Context of Learning in an Interracial School" in Ray C. Rist, editor, Desegregated Schools: Appraisals of an American Experiment. New York: Academic Press, 1979.

6. Schofield and Sagar, op.cit., p. 106.

7. The critical distinction between cultural and structural assimilation first came to the attention of the researcher when reading Peggy Reeves Sanday's, "Cultural & Structural Pluralism in the United States" in Peggy R. Sanday, editor, Anthropology and the Public Interest: Fieldwork and Theory. New York: Academic Press, 1979, pp. 53-73.

8. Murray L. Wax, principal editor. Desegregated Schools: An Intimate Portrait Based on Five Ethnographic Studies. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1980, p. 37.

9. C. Jencks et al., Inequality. New York: Basic Books, 1972, cited in Schofield and Sager, op.cit., p. 156.

10. I. Katz, "Review of Evidence Relating to Effects of Desegregation on the Performance of Negroes" American Psychologist 19:381-399, cited in Schofield and Sagar, op.cit., p. 156.

11. Schofield and Sagar, op.cit., p. 164-165.

12. Gordon Allport, The Nature of Prejudice. Cambridge, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1954.

13. Janet Ward Schofield, "School Desegregation and Intergroup Relations" in D. Bar-Tal and L. Saxe, eds., The Social Psychology of Education: Theory and Research. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978, p. 334.

14. For example, Mercer L. Sullivan, op.cit., pp.237-238 and Murray L. Wax, principal editor. Desegregated Schools: An Intimate Portrait Based on Five Ethnographic Studies. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1980, p. 37.

15. Gordon W. Allport, The Nature of Prejudice. Cambridge, Mass. Addison-Wesley, 1954, p. 148.